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ACE Practical Portfolio Task 2: Report

Academic and Employability Skills

BMSW4001

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April 2021

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Introduction

The topics I chose for my report are CV Writing, Public speaking and presentation, Online learning experience and time management/organising study.

I chose this topics because as we know, the world is changing so fast, especially technology and makes it hard to focus only on a single thing.

The chosen model of reflection is Gibbs Reflective Cycle which gives a structure to learning from experiences, allowing to learn and plan from things that either went well or didn't go well. It covers 6 stages such as Description, Feelings, Evaluation, Analysis, Conclusion and Action plan.

CV Writing

This topic we covered in our lessons was not new to me, however it contained information that was helpful and to which I would not have had access if it were not for this course.

During class lessons as we looked at how to create a good CV, I understood where I have made mistakes in my own CV and cover letter writing.

Although, I have done my own research prior to enrolling in this course in terms of CV writing, I still learned new things during the lesson such as how important fonts consistency is, what are power words, how to make it easy to read for employers and writing a personal statement. I also learned what not to include on a CV.

As a non English native, it can be easy to include a lot of irrelevant information such as photograph, date of birth, nationality, marital status or meaningless introductions as many European countries do require the above.

As stated by Indeed (2021) “ your resume is a place to showcase the achievements that make you a great employee, so stick to information that’s most relevant to the job. “

While researching, according to CV Library (2020) I found out that the most popular font is Arial and Calibri. Also quantifying accomplishments where possible can bring the work experience to life and help hiring managers envision the potential impact you could have in their organisation.

Going forward, I will be able to write and have a professional CV where I will be applying all lessons learned to avoid any common mistakes I have been doing prior to learning the right way.

Public speaking and giving presentations

Public speaking and giving presentation has always been an issue as I was not feeling very comfortable in doing this task.

I believe I wasn’t confident in doing presentations as I never had an actual structure and was mainly improvising.

These lessons have given me the knowledge about the actual structure, how to open a presentation, how important it is to speak at a natural rate of speech instead of rushing through, how body language plays an important role and that critical information must be repeated.

According to British Council, (2021), part of body language is eye contact and is very important that the presenter make eye contact, ideally with every person as many students tend to look at one spot or at the teacher.

Practice of giving presentations also required my video camera to be on, just to mimic an in-person presentation which also added a boost of aid in controlling my distress in public speaking.

Practice and feedback were the key aspects for the development of these skills and the lessons we had in class have allowed me to gain confidence and overcome my fear of speaking in front of an audience.

The skills gained have helped me develop better presentations skills based on the structure learned, which have shown that when there is a good knowledge and understanding on any given subject, fear and emotions can be controlled.

Presentations can be quite daunting regardless of the subject, but I think that the most daunting tasks are the ones you gain the most from.

Overall, I am pleased with the results of this topic and actually really enjoyed researching it and gather the information in an interesting way, instead of feeling overwhelmed.

It has also made me determined to actually research it outside of my teaching classes and helped infinitely because I was not unenthusiastic about working on it and improve something that has been a major lack I had.

I also enjoyed the presentation I had to prepare as part of one of our assignments and I was very pleased with the result as I managed to stay on time, be clear and have a fluent speech.

As part of the academic course, doing presentations and public speaking in a structured way, I feel is one of the things that has most built on my confidence in delivering presentations in front of an audience regardless of the environment, academic or professional.

Online learning experience

As someone who spends a lot of time using technology and the internet to study or in general, the idea of online learning did not disconcert me.

Although online classes are more convenient for many reasons than traditional classes, they should be looked at as typical classes and not taken lightly.

Doing lectures and taking part in lessons via Microsoft Teams require a different approach than doing just a research or watching a movie.

However, my online learning experience has been a positive one and it has helped me to obtain a structure I was looking for.

In comparison to this course, my first online course I took, was different from multiple aspects such as: I had no direct communication with my tutor, feedback for the assignments was a voice message sent through the unit I was marked for and there was no deadline for assignments submission. I found it very difficult in communicating with mentors and other students that were taking the same course.

Although an online discussion board was created where all classmates had access to, the feedback or communication was somewhat limited as the interaction was based on waiting for other students to comment on any given subject or respond to any query which sometimes was taking even more than 48 hours.

Nonetheless, in this class all feedback was given right away, also interactions with colleagues and lecturer were possible in real time which also helped to form relationships between students and getting to know everyone.

When it comes to communications between the university and students, I cannot fault for one second the support received.

Also, the university provides links to a variety of support services, such as Moodle, London students hall, Library or IT Hub just to name a few.

Furthermore, I do not feel as I am missing out on anything by taking classes online. Actually, they offered me the flexibility to balance school, work and family. And also, saved me time on travelling that I can spend with family.

In the future, I believe that online learning will become the new norm, as due to the pandemic, universities had to adapt and change the way of delivering courses to be able to still operate and continue the teaching classes.

Also, has been proved that it has the capacity of being successful for many students and universities.

Finally, if given a choice, I would take all my classes online.

Time management/organising study

Many people face the troubling of time management because they have too many tasks to manage at the same time.

It requires a balance between professional life, social life and any other activities like hobbies.

If we look from an academic point of view, students have many subjects to cover and assignments to do, therefore, managing the time efficiently is important.

As a professional who comes from a management working environment, this task was not as new, but still showed me a new way of controlling my time and improved my awareness on where I was spending more time than necessary on any given piece of work.

One of the exercises we had to do in class, was a weekly calendar. Before this lesson, I never used a weekly calendar, I was more of a day by day person which meant that I have never seen the bigger picture of the tasks I had to perform over a longer period of time.

To be able to see the bigger picture I stepped out from my way of managing time and started to make use of the new information received, such as map and monitor my study time, but also found out where all my time was going and how long would take for all the tasks I needed to perform.

This helped me to get a better sense of how I was spending my time and how should I spend it in the future.

I've also learned about the natural body clock and that there are peak times for my own performance which is why I am more focused at certain times than others.

As stated by CMI (2020) paying attention to when I feel naturally productive or energetic and when I really struggle to keep eyes open, helps to figure out the best working or studying hours and shape the to do list according to when I'll be most likely to get harder tasks done well.

I have not had any major issues in terms of time management, however, after taking this class, I realised that I was doing all tasks I was meant to, but there was no time for myself.

So I started in doing a bit more research online and took advantage of our virtual library and studied more in depth as I was determined to find a way to improve my efficiency also giving me some free time.

Overall, I enjoyed the lessons and activities we had to do in class and I personally believe that my time and productivity have improved significantly.

Conclusion

All points considered in this report, it has been a productive learning journey for myself, allowing me to improve valuable skills that I can further use in my career and life in general.

Looking back I can see how online learning, cv writing , time management / organising study, public speaking and giving presentations are connected to each other as all these skills combined allow me to work and study more efficiently.

Not only that, when using them, they also give me the structure I need to be able to increase and improve my productivity throughout the day or week.

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